

## FROM THE EDITORS

THE VII INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on Easter Island and the Pacific, which took place at Gotland University, Sweden at the end of August, is to be seen as another major arena for discussion and dialogue. With 200 participants from 27 nations, it is really true to say that Easter Island and the Pacific attract attention from all over the world. It was wonderful to greet old colleagues and friends as well as making new acquaintances, and to take part in the academic discussions. In this global arena of dialog, many interesting papers that contribute to the ongoing debate were presented. The themes spanned a wide variety: from the presentation of new archaeological and geological data, re-evaluation of old data and new ways of analyzing archaeological and environmental data on Rapa Nui with digital tools, to issues concerning what it means to be Rapanui, and how the island is presented to the World.

Most notable and refreshing during the conference were several young Rapanui professionals, some inspired by Rapanui archaeologist Sonia Haoa (CONADI), and who have now entered the arena of scientific discussions. They talked about the past as well as engaged themselves in the concerns of the future of their small and vulnerable Island. We hope, in the future, to see and read more from the research and points of views of these young Rapanui in *Rapa Nui Journal* or other publications on Pacific research.

Debate and the questioning of scientific results are central themes for the scientific *modus operandi*, and new results are the necessary fuel for ongoing discussions. All this creates a useful dialogue, helping to recover new data and developing new research methods, and it also enables us to see research questions from new angles. The discussions in current archaeological research on Easter Island focus on issues such as the initial settlement dates as well as deforestation and catastrophic scenarios. These ongoing discussions require an evaluation of old data sets and a search for new data sets, as well as the development or refinement of scientific methods.

In this issue, Terry Hunt and Carl Lipo continue the discussion on initial settlement dates for Easter Island as well as past human impact on the Rapa Nui environment, in a reply to the paper by John Flenley and Paul Bahn, "Conficting View of Easter Island" which appeared in our last issue (May 2007:11-13). Following the paper by Hunt and Lipo, Flenley, Bahn and Butler add a brief rebuttal.

Candace Gossen's report presents the results of her research on the *scirpus* found in the crater lake at Rano Kau. Her findings provide some fascinating information on past climate change. And, another short report, by Georgia Lee, provides an additional point of dialogue. It is a matter of contemporary Rapanui interacting with the past by making new petroglyphs. These acts are a statement of how past actions and expressions are transformed and used in the contemporary setting to reveal something about identity and

heritage, and gives rise to a discussion of authentic rock art when "old" and "new" blur over the passage of time.

David Addison's study continues with Part 3 in his dialogue concerning Marquesan agriculture and land use as observed in the contact phase; and Shawn McLaughlin provides a reflection concerning the sweet potato in the Pacific, based on the recent monograph *The Sweet Potato in Oceania: A Re-appraisal*.

Our "Look Back" feature is the Spanish visit to Rapa Nui in 1770 when, by raising three crosses on Poike, they tried to convey the message of Christianity and superiority. The "Getting to know you" page makes us more familiar with the French archaeologist Michel Orliac, who has a longstanding research interest in the East Polynesian area and whose book, *Easter Island: Mystery of the Stone Giants*, co-written with his wife Catherine, is a must-have for every Rapanuiophile.

Helene Martinsson-Wallin and Paul Wallin

THE VII INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on Easter Island and the Pacific was not only a successful meeting but a truly rewarding experience. Visby, Gotland's main city, is a delight. Medieval buildings, cobblestone streets, ancient ruins, crenellated towers, museums, and lovely parks charmed all. Conference attendees scurried about, cameras at the ready. Well-planned sightseeing trips to some of Gotland's archaeological sites were a real treat and a chance to interact with other conference members outside of the lecture halls. And, as always, having the opportunity to talk informally with one's peers is one of the great perks of any conference.

Opening ceremonies included a welcome from the President of the Municipality and County Council, Lilian Edwards. Helene Martinsson-Wallin spoke as did the President of the University, Leif Borgert. Owe Ronström and his son entertained with a hilarious program that had everyone jumping in their seats. Dave Rose, EIF president, welcomed attendees and was followed by Chris Stevenson. A dance performance by Susana Nahoe was next and then Sonia Haoa spoke, to be followed by a filmed greeting from His Highness, Tupua Tamasese. The keynote speech by John Flenley was next – and the conference was off to a great start!

The final party, a Medieval Banquet, was great fun. Locals came in costumes, including a Viking on a horse, with all the trappings. There were dancing girls, fire dancers, an feast of barbequed roast lamb, among other things. It was an event to remember and one that will be hard to top in the future. We thank Paul and Helene for all the hard work and planning that goes into a successful conference.

Finally, we thank Dr Paul Horley for allowing us to use his excellent photographs taken at the conference. Many more images can be seen at:

<http://www.islandheritage.org/conference2007.html>

Georgia Lee